

SN. 09/651,654

ATTORNEY DOCKET NO. CANO:013

REMARKS

Claims 1-3, 6-9, 12-15, and 18 remain pending in this application for which applicant seeks reconsideration.

Amendment

Claims 4, 5, 10, 11, 16, and 17 have been canceled. Claims 1-3, 6-9, 12-15, and 18 have been amended to clarify the "importance of the keywords," and to further improve the form by removing minor inconsistencies ("step" in the program claims) and informalities ("such as"). No new matter has been introduced.

Art Rejection

Claims 1-18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by Sano (USP 5,038,379). Applicant respectfully submits that the amended claims clearly define over Sano within the meaning of § 102 and § 103.

As presently claimed in claim 1, the image search apparatus searches the stored image data based on an input query and the keywords stored in relation to the image data. It calls for an acquiring means for acquiring the importance of the keywords in relation to the image data. The importance is stored in relation to the keywords stored in relation to the image data. Moreover, in light of the examiner's comment (during the previous interview) that rearranging requires a previous arrangement, the claims have been clarified that the search results are "output" in an order according to the importance of the keywords acquired by the acquiring means. As previously explained, the importance is not assigned to the keywords themselves, but rather to the relation between the keyword and the content of the images. Other claims, namely the method and program claims, parallel the apparatus claims.

Sano does not disclose or teach assigning importance of the keyword in the search, let alone assigning it in relation to the image content. Sano merely discriminates images by sorting the image data containing the keywords assigned to the image data from other images that are not assigned with the search keyword. Sano does not disclose ordering the output images according

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to the importance of the images searched.

Conclusion

Applicant submits that the pending claims patentably distinguish over the applied references and are in condition for allowance. Should the examiner have any issues concerning this reply or any other outstanding issues remaining in this application, applicant urges the examiner to contact the undersigned to expedite prosecution.

Respectfully submitted,

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